

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

My last commentary was about lunches that kids used to take to school back in the 'thirties'. Left overs were included as households lacked the sophisticated refrigeration systems we have today so you could not toss the left overs in the freezer to be used at a later date. My grandfather built our house in Eighteen Ninety Two. The best he could do then to keep food cold for a couple of days were to build a louvered, screened wooden cabinet into the north wall of the pantry. This "cooler" was used for dairy products and other perishables. He also built an outside rack nearby that would hold about two boxes of apples always buying 'keepers' so there was a supply of apples as far into the winter as possible. When I was a kid, we had advanced to an ice box then to a refrigerator. I used to stand in front of the fridge and marvel at what was going on inside. Food shopping was a true challenge. The freshness at the market was very important so the items would last longer in the home. I remember one year when my mother went shopping for a Thanksgiving turkey. She walked to town (about two miles one way) to one of the major meat markets where they had a large display of the birds. The butcher assured her they were very fresh so she chose one and returned home storing it in our cooler. The next day, as she was preparing the bird, she found it had started to spoil. Too late to return the carcass, a very upset lady prepared a substitute dinner (I don't remember what it was). The day after Thanksgiving, Mom made the two mile trek to the market and told the butcher of our misfortune. The butcher asked her if she had brought the bird with her so he could give her a refund. In no uncertain terms she told him that if he wanted the bird back he would have to come out to the house and dig it up. The refund was then offered and accepted without the presence of the bird and Mom never set foot in that establishment again. My mother, like many other ladies in the community, would only patronize a meat market where she could trust the butcher to sell her the very best. During this period, there were still many vendors selling their wares from vehicles. My mother didn't trust a lot of the vendors to give you a fair deal. She did buy from one particular fish monger when she heard his very loud horn as his truck passed through the neighborhood but generally she would point out the ceramic sign posted on one of our steps leading to the front porch which read "no peddlers or agents". Mom could be a cranky sort when it came to the purchasing of food but she had a great safety record for our family.

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